

29 June 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Reflections on O/NE Procedure

Particular
(in the long
run very
damaging
to the idea
and the in-
stitution)
of Central
Intelligence)

1. By engaging in detailed and exhaustive negotiation with the IAC working-level representatives for the purpose of arriving at contractual agreements on precise wording of estimates, the NEB:

(a) has abandoned its proper function of reviewing and approving intelligence estimates and instead has taken over the Staff job of discovering IAC working-level views and expressing them insofar as they are sound in written estimates;

(b) has undertaken to revise (and virtually rewrite) estimates in the IAC group, in what are probably the worst circumstances for a drafting job;

(c) has in practice abandoned the principle of CIA's enunciation of national intelligence as viewed by a central body exercising superior judgment (the NEB) and instead endorsed the principle of drafting estimates so full of compromise phrases that all representatives can agree on them.

QUERY: What happened to the principle that the NEB would sit in judgment on basic issues, formulating its own views crisply and forthrightly after hearing all the evidence and views of the IAC representatives?

Particular
(relatively
minor)

2. By giving all papers, good or bad, equally intensive editorial revision in accordance with the stylistic preferences of all conferees, the NEB has made it virtually useless and therefore -- as a result of the effect on the morale of Staff members -- quite difficult for the Chief, Estimates Staff to establish and apply high standards of brevity and precision in drafting before papers reach the NEB.

QUERY: What happened to the principle that nitpicks would be passed to the Staff and NEB conferences reserved for issues?
(See CES Memo to NEB, 27 Feb 51, approved in toto 1 Mar 51,
Subject: "Recommended Procedures for National Estimates Board"
Paragraph 2:

"2. When the Staff presents a finished draft to the NEB, one of the two Board members assigned to read the original IAC contributions should review the draft and, on the basis of an informal canvass of Board members, prepare an agenda of main substantive issues to be discussed by the NEB in formal session and, if it appears necessary, arrange for submission of suggested major changes or additions in writing. Detailed suggestions involving phrasing, style, and

minor substantive points rather than main substantive ideas should be submitted in writing (in the form of marginal notes on drafts) to the Staff for incorporation insofar as they do not conflict with one another or with the formal NEB discussion. ")